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SUPPLEMENT TO
THE COMMUNIST THREAT TO IRAQ

November 1958

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I. THE TREASON TRIALS AND THE COMMUNISTS

A 15 July Peking commentary on the Iraqi revolution may have predicted the current trials when it included the statement that "a new conspiracy will surely be engineered to undermine the Iraqi people's movement for national independence". The Egyptians claim that Qasim is making arrests on the basis of intelligence reports furnished him by the Soviet Embassy, and without reference to his own Police or Interior officials. New information indicates that Military Court President al-Mahdawi is a Communist sympathizer and the brother-in-law of Premier Qasim.

II. IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION BY FOREIGN COMMUNISTS OF CPI STRATEGY

An article in the Italian Communist Party's L'Unita of 25 October (article attached, see Appendix I) gives an interesting rationalization of why the CPI has taken a stand in favor of federation, rather than union, with the UAR. In assuming that a federative status for Iraq would allow freedom of action for nationalist political parties therein while union would not, the article reasons that the "solid base" of mass support so derived would furnish the best guarantee for the stability of the new government. Furthermore, in noting the CPI/Iraqi government agreement in at least paying lip-service to the ideal of federation, the article claims that the Iraqi Communists are exerting "an influence which is now revealing itself to be decisive" in this matter.

In an attempt not to take a completely anti-Nasir stand, the L'Unita article stresses the idea that political conditions in Iraq and Egypt differed so as to make the expression of Arab nationalism in these two countries also different. It claims that in Egypt, the revolutionary military officers "did not know how to associate themselves with the best part of the liberation movement (apparently the Communists) so as to assure from the very beginning a base of solid, organized, and democratic mass for new power". Moreover, it states that the Nasir regime, in waging a battle against all Egyptian political parties, was "partially justified" in considering them "by

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nature incapable of imposing a radical change". On the other hand, the article states that the military leaders of the Iraqi coup had been in close association with the National Front (Communist, National Democratic, Baathist, and Istiqlal) and that two of the latter's component parties had actively aided the revolution by arming and organizing the peasants to enable them to act decisively at the proper moment. (That this appears to be overdrawn does not concern us here.)

Finally, the article takes some jibes at government and Baathist officials in the Arab Middle East who think that the Communists are not a necessary element in the fight for independence. It criticizes "several men in the Cairo government" who ignore the "differing conditions" and apply the same yardstick in Iraq as in Egypt; adding that "in the inner circles of the Baghdad government there has been someone (apparently Col. Arif) who has shared this way of seeing things and has had the imprudence to act accordingly." And last, the article cynically states that Egyptian officials, "faced with the problem of the necessity of giving a democratic articulation to the structure of the Egyptian state, in order to assure Egypt the leadership of the Arab liberation movement", apparently "have not yet succeeded in overcoming a deep aversion . . . against every form of autonomous organization of the masses". Therefore, though the article begins by stressing a basic agreement between Baghdad and Cairo on the "fight against imperialism" and "for Arab nationalism", the definite impression emerges that for the Communists the situation in Iraq is much to be preferred to that in Egypt. In this light, it should be added that the Communist Party of Egypt began a propaganda attack on the Cairo government in April of this year because of the latter's refusal to allow Communist leadership in Egyptian organizations, especially in the trade union sphere.

Nearly a month later than the appearance of the L'Unita article, Zygie Warsawy's (Polish) Cairo correspondent wrote:

"The reason why the Iraqi Communists are supporting their own ruling bourgeoisie [apparently Qasbi and the National Democratic

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Party/ and supporting an Arab countries' federation rather than extension of the UAR to Iraq is that the nascent bourgeoisie gives birth to the working class, its antagonist.'

While this is another justification for the present Iraqi Communist strategy, it also indicates that Communist/government cooperation is only temporary and that after the situation stabilizes, the former may again move to upset the status quo.

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III. RECOGNITION OF THE COMMUNIST THREAT BY OVERT SOURCES

The Economist's Baghdad correspondent has written an interesting and definitive article on the current Iraqi situation in that publication's 25 October issue. In this he states that Qasim leans on the anti-Egyptian Communists for support against Arif and the Baathists. He states that Col. Arif was not ousted simply because of his attacks on the West, as has been widely assumed; he notes that Arif "got in some shrewd digs at the Soviet Union, saying repeatedly during his whistle-stop tours of the country, that Iraq had no intention of replacing one form of imperialism by another". The same author notes that in the Iraqi press: "no criticism of the eastern bloc has yet appeared, whereas the west comes in for monotonous hammering".

Joseph Alsop, in his column appearing in the Washington Post on 29 October, also gets the point. He states that a conflict between Col. Arif, leading a "100 per cent pro-Nasir group" and Gen. Qasim, "vigorously encouraged and supported by the Communists", endured once the coup was successful. He adds that the Communists are represented in the new government by Ibrahim Kubba. Also then offers the interesting speculation that Nasir is acquiescing to a Communist takeover in Iraq in return for Soviet aid on the Aswan Dam.

Henry N. Taylor, writing in the 13 November Washington Daily News, notes that Iraq is one place where Nasir and the Soviets are rivals, that Arif was ousted when Qasim discovered him "pushing Iraq too fast into Nasir's camp, and that in place of Arif, Qasim "seems to be relying on advisors perilously Red-tinged". Taylor adds that Ibrahim Kubba "is a West-hater, widely accused of being a Communist", that the Baghdad radio "has recently been broadcasting worse anti-U.S. lies than Cairo or Moscow", and that "infiltration by Moscow seems heaviest in the Iraqi air force and propaganda ministry". The air force reference probably alludes to Awqati's past Peace Partisan activities among other things; Taylor's and Alsop's common, incorrect characterization of Kubba as "the new minister of development" indicates the probable use of identical sources.

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APPENDIX I

THE ARAB COMMUNISTS

L'Unita

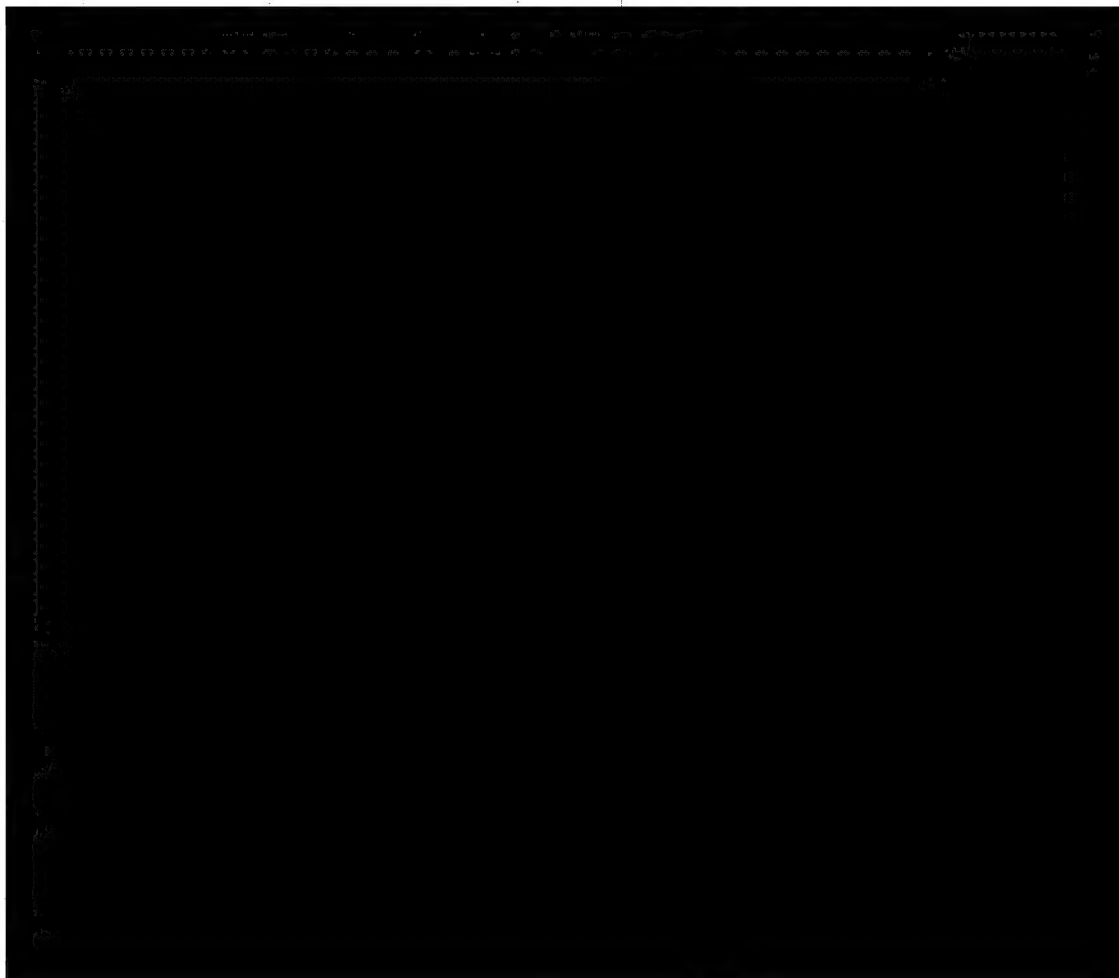
/Unity/

26 October 1958, Rome

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Alberto Jacoviello

Fight Against Imperialism and Unification



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The basal insinuations of Facciardi, according to which the triumph of the revolutionary movement in Iraq has weakened the position of the Uikro government, have been received with evident contempt. "Facciardi," Cairo says, "makes the same mistake as do those in Washington, and not by accident, that is, in maintaining that the discussion now underway on the best ways to go through with the process of unification of the Arab nation can bring into question the fundamental principle on which both the policy of the UAR and the policy of Iraq are based. This principle is the common fight for the liberation of all Arab lands from imperialist domination." There is no problem of relations between Iraq and the UAR, both Baghdad and Cairo maintain (and we received authoritative statements to the same effect ourselves in both capitals), which is not confronted from the point of view of the common task of the complete liberation of the Arab world from imperialism. Within the framework of the strictest respect for this principle and this policy has been opened the discussion on the forms under which both Iraq and the UAR should contribute to the process of unification of the Arab nation; and the proceedings are progressing quite constructively.

Arab communists are participating in this discussion, which now has the appearance of a real treaty, with an influence which is now revealing itself to be decisive; this is true especially of the Iraqi communists, who are more directly interested, and also of communists of the other Arab countries, insofar as they are interested, in the future if not immediately. The position of the Arab communists is summarized in the demand that the movement of unification of the Arab nation begin from the bottom and arrive at the top through a process different from the one followed in the unification of Egypt and Syria. Hence the proposal for a federal union founded on the most ample autonomy of every single participating country, as is the case of Yemen with respect to the UAR. The Arab communists base this position on two fundamental arguments. In the first place, they say, it is impossible to undo between today and tomorrow everything which has been crystallizing in every single country throughout a long period of division. In the second place the political situation differs profoundly between one state and another, due for the most part to objective historical circumstances; this is particularly true between Iraq

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and the Egyptian part of the UAR. Not to take this into account, they add, would mean to launch into an adventure which could have quite dangerous consequences for the general cause of the liberation and of the unification of the Arabs. "

Not all of the officials of the Arab national movement, especially in Egypt, have shown appreciation for these arguments. Thus there have been polemics, which in the past weeks have even touched sore spots, between the most fervent adherents of total union immediately between Iraq and the UAR on one side and the communists and their allies on the other. What do the adherents of a total and immediate union between Iraq and the UAR support? To delay the union into one state of countries liberated from foreign subjection means, they say, to offer a field of maneuver for imperialism to resume to the offensive. In particular they maintain that until Iraq purely and simply joins the UAR, the power obtained from the revolutionary movement of 14 July will not be able to stabilize itself sufficiently to confront the imperialist attempt to bring things back where they were. The Iraqi communists, in agreement on this with the majority if not with all the men in the Baghdad government, reply that the solidarity of the new power is guaranteed by the full support and the organized vigilance of the masses of people, adding that if an Arab federal state must rise at the same pace as the liberation of every single country, then its power and its solidarity cannot found itself otherwise than on the organized masses of the people.

These are the basic questions of the discussion underway. It is then a discussion on internal matters of the great liberation and unification movement of the Arab nation and brings in an important problem for the future. Many influential officials of the Arab national movement agree that the misunderstanding is the result of objective historical circumstances, which are furthermore reflected very clearly in the different character of the Iraqi revolutionary movement as compared with the movement that dethroned Farouk in Egypt. In Egypt the coup d'etat was planned and carried out by a group of officers who, although they went through various political formations personally, did not know how (they say not without

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reason that they could not have known how) to associate themselves with the best part of the liberation movement so as to assure from the very beginning a base of solid, organized, and democratic mass for the new power. Thus they have conducted, as their power continued to consolidate, a battle without quarter against all political parties, since they were considered, and in part justifiably so, by nature incapable of imposing a radical change in Egypt's course. Things have since developed so that today the Egyptian officials, although they have attained the greatest merits in the eyes of their people and of all Arabs, seem to a certain extent prisoners of the internal situation which they themselves have helped to create. One symptom of that is in the fact that when they are faced with the problem of the necessity of giving a democratic articulation to the structure of the Egyptian state, in order to assure Egypt of the leadership of the Arab liberation movement, one has the impression that they have not yet succeeded in overcoming a deep aversion which they have had from the beginning against every form of autonomous organization of the masses.

In Iraq the situation is profoundly different. The men who at the head of several battalions overthrew the old power were, up to 1956, in close association with the parties of the National Front (Communist, National Democrat, Baathist, and Independence), the strength and driving power of the resistance and fight against the regime of Nuri as Said and Abdul Illah. And when, in the first 40 hours following the victory of the revolutionary movement in the city of Baghdad, the commanders of three divisions of the standing army in three different points of Iraq threatened to march on the capital to reverse the situation, it was the peasants, armed and organized by two of the parties of the National Front who prevented it, thus permitting General Kassem to gain time precious for the fate of the new power. All that has brought it about that at the very moment when the government of the revolutionary movement was being installed, there were conditions for the organization of a government system profoundly different from the Egyptian.

Several men of the Cairo government have given the impression in the days and weeks following 14 July that they wish to

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ignore this reality and judge the situation in Iraq by the same yardstick as in Egypt; in the inner circles of the Baghdad government there has been someone who has shared this way of seeing things and has had the imprudence to act accordingly. This has resulted in a situation of noticeable friction inside Iraq and in the relations between Iraq and Egypt. Today this state of affairs seems to have passed, and perhaps the day is not far off when Nasser and Kassem will meet and have a frank and friendly discussion on the best means to achieve the closest cooperation between Iraq and the UAR.

But at the same time it is necessary, if the understanding is to be full and have a solid base, that the non-communist political circles of the UAR and other Arab countries review the positions they have taken lately in regard to the communists. Though they are not yet a great force in Egypt, the communists are deeply rooted in the masses in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and other Arab countries; they have organized the great majority of the active population and they represent the most advanced point in the anti-imperialist ranks. To continue to maintain--as do some officials in Baathist, Syrian, Jordan, and in part even Iraqi circles, that one can do without, not only the active collaboration of the communists, but even the very existence of the Communist Party in those lands, in the present phase of the fight of the Arab people for independence and the unity of the Arab Nation--means to wish deliberately to ignore reality, with all the consequences which can be derived from that for the Arab movement for liberation and unification. The lesson of Syria in this matter is illuminating. If today it were not for the communists in Syria to prevent the imperialist attempt to break up unity with Egypt, it is not known how certain officials of the Baath Party, who have too easily renounced the existence of their organization, could contribute what they say they wish to contribute to the unity of the Arab nation.

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